



News Release

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Utahns Following Flu Vaccine Recommendations

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah’s limited flu vaccine supply is getting to those who need it most, but the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) says more high-risk individuals still need to get their flu shot, so officials will continue to ask healthy people to wait for now.

The UDOH has been tracking the limited flu vaccine supplies throughout the state over the last month and appreciates the cooperation of providers, clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and others in getting the vaccine to those at greatest risk. “The response from the general public and health care providers has been very positive,” says Linda Abel, Immunization Program Manager, UDOH. “This has alleviated the need for Utah to assess fines or develop regulations to control supplies like in other states.”

“The response has been a little too good in that even some high-risk people have chosen to wait so others at higher risk could get their shot first,” said Abel. Abel says that some, such as people with asthma or diabetes, are harder to convince that they need the vaccine because they feel healthy and may even feel guilty by getting the shot. The UDOH encourages all high-risk individuals to get vaccinated now, even if they feel healthy.

The UDOH has updated the priority groups to include anyone who provides care for someone with chronic or long-lasting illnesses. The priority groups are now as follows:

- caregivers of those with chronic illnesses, such as cancer or severely weakened immune systems (**new**)
- children 6 months to 23 months of age
- adults 65 years of age and older
- persons 2 years to 64 years with chronic medical conditions
- all women who will be pregnant during influenza season
- residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- children 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin therapy
- health care workers providing direct patient care
- out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months of age

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The UDOH recommends other vaccine options for individuals not in the priority groups. Healthy individuals ages 5-49 years (who are not pregnant) can get the nasal spray vaccine known as FluMist. This includes health care workers and those who are regularly around infants younger than 6 months. FluMist should not be used for those who care for severely immunocompromised patients. FluMist will be available at the following health departments: Bear River, Davis, Salt Lake Valley, Southeast, Summit, Tooele, Tri-County and Utah.

UDOH continues to stress ways to reduce the risk of getting sick, such as:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue away
- Washing your hands
- Staying away from other people when you are sick

If you think you have influenza, you may want to see your doctor within 24 hours. Symptoms usually begin within one to two days after being exposed, and may include a sudden onset of fever, muscle aches and pains, cough and or sore throat. Prescription antiviral medications can reduce the duration of flu if taken within two days after symptoms begin. If you get the flu, rest, drink plenty of liquids, avoid using alcohol and tobacco, and take medication to relieve the symptoms of flu.

UDOH also recommends that individuals 65 years of age and older or those who have long-lasting medical problems receive the pneumonia vaccine. Pneumonia is a life-threatening complication resulting from influenza. Pneumonia vaccine, which is readily available, can be given year round and is usually given just once in a lifetime.

For more information about influenza and pneumonia vaccinations, contact your health care provider, local health department, or the UDOH Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659. Physicians and nursing homes wanting additional information on vaccine resources may contact the Utah Immunization Program at 801-538-9450. For influenza case updates and other information, go to: www.health.utah.gov/epi

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